



From back left: David Rost, Ethan Rost, six, Caitlyn Rost, nine, Ashlyn Rost, six, Amy Rost and Brendan Gillingham-Rost in San Francisco August of 2014.

Photo submitted

Kimmett Cup ambassador visits Skywalker Ranch

Town council proclaims Jan. 15 Children's Wish Foundation day

By Allison Drinnan
The Eagle

Last year at the sixth annual Kimmett Cup, a young man named Brendan Gillingham-Rost stood before a large crowd and shared a speech he had prepared as ambassador of the annual pond hockey tournament in honour of Lindsay Kimmett.

It wasn't a speech just about hockey, or just about celebrating the day's events, but about how the tournament and community's efforts had directly helped the then 17-year-old Gillingham-Rost.

"It took a little courage, but once I started with the actual speaking part of it, it wasn't too bad," said Gillingham-Rost, nearly a year later.

"Now I am here to speak about my life and highlight certain happenings within it," Gillingham-Rost's speech began. "Things have gotten hard, however, over the last three years, because I was diagnosed with Friedreich's Ataxia in November of 2010."

Friedreich's Ataxia, or FA, is a rare genetic disease that affects Gillingham-Rost's fine

motor skills.

"I hate everything about it. My life is hard but not unbearable," he continued. "FA has truly changed my life forever."

But he then went on to share that he would soon be given an experience that would change his life forever thanks to the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada and the Kimmett Cup.

Last year's tournament raised \$147,000 for the Children's Wish Foundation, an organization that helps Canadian children and families by granting the wish of a child diagnosed with a life-threatening illness.

Mayor Ivan Brooker said that Cochrane council has agreed to proclaim today (Jan. 15) Children's Wish Foundation day in Cochrane in support of the Kimmett Cup's fundraising effort. In August, Gillingham-Rost had his wish granted to visit the Skywalker Ranch in California, where George Lu-

cas keeps most of the props and costumes from the "Star Wars" franchise. It also houses a fully functioning sound studio and Lucas' private office.

"It was pretty exciting. I didn't really all together know

"What I want people to know is that I have Friedreich's Ataxia and even though it may take me a little longer to do things, I am still Brendan and I want to be treated the same as everyone else."

*- Brendan Gillingham-Rost,
2014 Kimmett Cup ambassador*

what to expect, because they keep that place pretty private, but I was definitely thrilled," said Gillingham-Rost of the trip.

He was able to hold a real lightsaber and even tried on the Darth Vader mask.

"I think he is an inspiration to a lot of people," said Gillingham-Rost's mother Amy Rost, who also visited the ranch. "He is a phenomenal speaker and he

really rises to that occasion."

Rost said hockey is a passion of her son's and that one of his greatest losses was that he could no longer play the sport he loved.

"It was amazing to see how the Kimmetts and everyone in the tournament rallied around and made him feel welcome and special and continue to," she said.

This sentiment was shared by Gillingham-Rost in his speech, thanking the community for coming together to do something for others.

"What I want people to know is that I have Friedreich's Ataxia and even though it may take me a little longer to do things, I am still Brendan and I want to be treated the same as everyone else," said Gillingham-Rost in the closing of his speech.

He has been invited back to the tournament this year to speak again, this time telling everyone about his trip.

Last year, Gillingham-Rost

said he had enjoyed watching the games, and even getting to drop a puck, although this year he isn't sure how much hockey he will get to take in.

Gillingham-Rost, like many other students, is studying hard in his final year at Cochrane High School and said he has plans to go to post secondary school to possibly study psychology.

But he is excited to once again share his experience at the annual tournament, this time with pictures and stories from his trip.

This year's tournament will take place Jan. 16-17 at Mitford Pond and Spray Lake Sawmills (SLS) Family Sports Centre.

Those who want to support the tournament can do so by going to kimmettcup.com and making a donation to Children's Wish and also by spreading the word of donating to family, friends and coworkers.

The fundraising goal for this year is to raise \$100,000. This will bring them to 50 per cent of the total goal of \$500,000, which will see 50 wishes granted.